



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



2024 Parent Handbook
YMCA Early Learning Center at Little Hands



Dear Parents,

Welcome to the YMCA Early Learning Center. We are delighted to partner with you in providing great beginnings for your child. YMCA Early Learning Centers provide developmentally appropriate early education experiences along with a consistent, loving, warm, nurturing, and caring environment for children 6 weeks – 5 years of age.

This handbook is designed to help our center run smoothly by clarifying parent and center obligations for guiding day-to-day operations. Please take time to become acquainted with the handbook's contents before your child begins our program. Please be sure to keep your handbook for referral throughout the year as questions may arise.

Our children, families, and staff are indeed our most valuable resources! We welcome your questions and suggestions and hope you will share your talents and service with our staff here at the YMCA Early Learning Center. We look forward to getting to know you better and having a rewarding year of learning and growing together. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns please see the Child Care Director.

Thank you,
YMCA Early Learning Center Staff at Little Hands



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YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Our program philosophy is to develop the whole child through SPIRIT, MIND, and BODY.

- SPIRIT – Introduce character development traits
- MIND – Learn through activity centers, computers, and developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum
- BODY – Develop fine and gross motor skills along with time for organized and free play daily

Our purpose is to provide a care program consistent with the highest quality of early childhood standards.

OBJECTIVES

The YMCA Early Learning Center welcomes you and your child! We desire to make this a happy and safe experience. The Y is the largest nonprofit childcare provider with a history of stability built on the core values of CARING, HONESTY, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, and FAITH.

At the YMCA, healthy child development starts early. That's why we offer early care and learning programs that help children learn the essential skills they will need to be ready for school. Our trained, supportive staff works to help children receive the best possible start to their education. The YMCA's Youth Development programs seek to help each child:

- Develop an appreciation for themselves, family, school, community, country, and other cultures.
- Learn through discovery and play, developing a love for lifelong learning.
- Prepare children for school readiness.
- Develop and improve personal skills such as neatness, originality, patience, and dependability.
- Develop and improve social skills: acceptance of others, cooperation, and responsibility.
- Develop healthy living and safety practices.
- Have FUN!

EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

In order to meet the individual intellectual needs of children we used the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development. Children receive a variety of learning experiences to foster cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Indoor and outdoor play introduces children to a great amount of language and social interactions. They are encouraged to express their feelings, develop self-confidence, and learn autonomy along with the ability to get along with others.

ENROLLMENT

The enrollment application for Youth Development programs is performed online and must be re-done yearly. In accordance with Department of Education requirements, the following information must include the relevant information, i.e. none or N/A are not acceptable. Failure to provide this information may delay your child's attendance in the program:

- Child's full name, full address, phone number, gender, and age of birth
- ONE, at a minimum, custodial guardian to include the guardian's full address and at least one phone number.
- TWO, at a minimum, emergency contact LOCAL ADULTS to include the emergency contact's full address and at least one phone number.

The Early Learning Center your child will be attending must also have a copy of the following:

- Medical form, (w/in 30 days of enrollment)
- Immunization Record, (w/in 30 days of enrollment)
- Medical Action Plan, if applicable,
- Emergency Medical Care Authorization Form and Information, and
- Over-the-Counter Skin Products Authorization form (as needed).

North Carolina's medical forms must be signed by your physician. Regulations by the State Board of Health for the immunization of children require documentation of all age-appropriate immunizations prior to each child's admission to a licensed childcare center.

The YMCA cannot accept your child into the YMCA Early Learning Center without this aforementioned documentation. It is also the responsibility of the guardian(s) to keep proper registration information and current phone numbers in the child's permanent record. Services may be withheld if this information is not updated in a timely manner.

HOURS & DAYS OF OPERATION

Our program provides full-time care for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years and operates Monday-Friday from 7:00 am to 5:30 pm. Parents must notify the center if a child will be late, picked up early, and/or picked up and returned for an appointment. Breakfast cut-off time will be 8:30 am. (Parents must feed their children if they arrive after meal times).

The center will be open Monday through Friday year-round with the exception of the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4th) and the day after (July 5th – for 2024)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day



NOTE: Full weekly fees are due for the week that we are closed for holidays.

PAYMENTS

A registration fee of (\$100.00) is due upon enrollment. This fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.

- Green Room – infants – \$210.00 per week
 - Blue Room – young toddlers – \$200.00 per week
 - Yellow Room – older toddlers – \$190.00 per week
 - Red Room – Pre-Kindergartners – \$180.00 per week
-
- The fixed weekly payment is due each Monday the week services are rendered, whether an enrolled child is in attendance or not. Monthly payments are to be made by the 5th of the month.
 - One week of vacation will be granted per child per calendar year (January – December) at no charge for that one (1) week. Parents must provide notice in writing or email.
 - Parents must give a two-week notice in writing when removing the child from the Center – if no notice is given; you will be billed for 2 weeks and are responsible for that payment according to the child's last attending day. (Vacation week may not be used as part of your 2-week notice.)
 - Participants will move up to the next room at the discretion of the teachers in discussion with the parents/guardians. Transitions to new classes will be made by participants spending partial days for one to two weeks with their new class. Participants will officially move up Monday of the following week, at which time the weekly rate would change.

YMCA Early Learning Center program payments are divided equally into weekly payments for the years of service provided. Few of the operating costs of the facility are eliminated when a child is absent; we are prepared for each child, each day, whether the child attends or not. Because of the aforementioned, there will not be any refunds, pro-rated fees, nor free weeks for days absent, including winter break, spring break, and holidays listed previously under hours and days of operation.

Additional fees may be assessed for late pick-up of participants and returned drafts.

- Late Payment: If payment is not made by Friday prior to the start of the next week, you may risk losing your child's space in the program.
- Late Pick-up fee: A late fee of \$1.00 per minute, per child, will be charged for any child not picked up by the scheduled end of the day. The balance will be drafted at the YMCA's earliest convenience.
- Returned Draft fees: Should your bank or credit card issuer for any reason not honor your draft, a return payment fee of \$30 will be assessed on your account in addition to the program payment due. This is also in addition to any service fee your bank may charge. Your account will be automatically re-debited on the next day for payment of a draft not honored. (To terminate or change your draft, 14 days written notice must be provided via email to YMCA.elc@trymca.org)



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The YMCA wants to provide services for everyone and does not want to turn anyone away due to his/her inability to pay for programs. Through the generosity of the Twin Rivers YMCA Annual Campaign we are able to offer a limited number of financial assistance spaces. In order to apply for financial assistance, the parent/guardian must complete a financial assistance application available at trymca.org.

For additional information please contact:
Membership Director, Troy Pennington
252-638-8799, tpennington@trymca.org

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION

We believe communication between guardians and the Early Learning Program Staff is crucial to ensuring a positive, enjoyable experience for your child. The YMCA will provide written notices regarding changes in policy, procedure, scheduling, or special events. It is the responsibility of the guardian to provide the YMCA ELC with the most up to date contact information, including email address.

The YMCA ELC uses an app called BrightWheel to communicate with parents/guardians. We ask that you communicate with us if your child will be absent from the YMCA ELC.

Parent conferences may be arranged at any time with teachers or the director. We appreciate your input regarding suggestions, ideas and comments on ways to improve our service to you and your family. You may direct suggestions, concerns, compliments or complaints to the immediate caregiver or one of the directors. Children may not receive personal phone calls at the YMCA ELC except in emergency situations.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The YMCA Early Learning Center programs have a consistent daily schedule for all children in the program. A typical day will provide a balance between child-directed and teacher-directed activities. Core content curriculum areas include literacy, math, science, social studies, art, character development and healthy eating and physical activity.

We appreciate families considering our schedule when picking up or dropping off children. It is better if arrivals and departures do not occur during quiet time, but when they do, please take note of the fact that children may be sleeping. Come and go as quietly and quickly as possible. Children who arrive during quiet time will be expected to rest until the rest period is over.

Example Schedule:

- Arrival
- Free Play Centers/Small Groups
- Literacy/Creative Activity
- Circle Time
- Outdoor Time
- Lunch
- Rest Time
- Afternoon Snack
- Story Time
- Outdoor Time
- Free Play Centers
- Departure

SUPPLIES PROVIDED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

Parents and/or guardians must supply the following items in their child's cubby:

- Formula and/or breastmilk. (ALL bottles and containers must be properly labeled with child's full name, date pumped, and date given to the center.)
- 2 complete sets of clothes, including undergarments and socks.
 - When potty training, an additional full set of clothes will be required.
- Sunscreen and bug spray (if different from what is provided)
- Diapers, pull-ups, wipes, and an extra pacifier that will remain at the center.
- Optional blanket (no larger than 54" x 36") for those 12+ months (Blanket will be washed and remain at the center.)

All belongings should be clearly marked with your child's name. Staff will notify you when items are running low and need to be restocked.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

Outdoor play: We will be playing outdoors every day that weather permits. Our activities will include walks, outdoor gross motor play, playground, and water play. We do not go outside when temperatures are below 32 degrees (including wind chill), or 90 degrees and above (including heat index).

Children should wear comfortable and appropriate clothing for indoor and outdoor activities. We strongly recommend that you send your child in serviceable clothes, not "party" best. We do not reimburse for clothing rips, stains or normal wear and tear.

Closed-toes (no tie) shoes must be worn at all times. Open-toed shoes or Heelys are not allowed, as they can be a safety hazard to your child. If you choose to send your child in rain boots, please send additional shoes for inside play. If you send your child in open-toed sandals or in "flip-flops", you may be called and asked to bring different shoes for your child. During the time it takes to bring your child's appropriate shoes, he/she may not be allowed to participate in the activity happening at that time.



PERSONAL ITEMS

We have plenty of equipment and activities to keep your child busy. Please do not allow any toys, video games, iPads/tablets, watches with games, or cell phones to accompany your child. This eliminates fights, theft and/or lost items. The YMCA is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Exceptions to this policy will be that a child may bring in toys for show-and-tell activities. All personal items must be clearly marked with the child's name.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP

Upon arrival for the program, the parent/guardian or authorized person must:

- Accompany your child to the front door of the YMCA ELC. A staff member must be present when you drop your child off, do not leave your child if a staff member is not present. We cannot be held responsible for your child if we are uncertain of his/her presence.
- Sign the child into the YMCA program by using the BrightWheel App and scanning the QR code located on the front door.
- Child MUST be dropped off prior to 9 am unless staff are notified in advance.

Your children may be picked up by authorized persons only, as stated in the enrollment application. Other arrangements may be made in writing to inform the YMCA of an additional authorized person. Staff will request identification of anyone that we do not know. Authorized persons must have a valid driver's license or identification card from the DMV.

- In addition, the Y requires a copy of any legal documentation that restricts another guardian's access to a child. We will restrict access as required by the legal documentation only.
- Authorized persons must sign the child out of the YMCA ELC program, using the BrightWheel App and scanning the QR code located on the front door.

Should an authorized person arrive to pick-up your child and appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the Y staff members will take necessary measures to ensure the safety of the child, including contacting the police. Please do not put staff in a position where they have to make this judgment call.

LATE PICK-UP

If your child is not picked-up by the end of his/her program, a late fee of \$1 per minute, per child will be drafted at the YMCA's earliest convenience. This fee is used to pay the staff who remain with your child.

- If you know you are going to be late, call us. We do understand that things come up and traffic can be challenging even in the best of times. We tend to worry about your safety just as much as your child does. Please be considerate.
- If we have not heard from you by 15 minutes after closing time and we cannot reach you by phone, emergency contacts will be called.
- If a child has not been picked-up one (1) hour after closing, Child Protective Services will be called.

The YMCA has found that it is necessary to have an excessive late pick-up policy, which could result in you being asked to remove your child from our program. Many of our staff go to school or have other positions that require them to be on time for those duties.

In the event of extreme inclement weather (not to include normal rainfall or other normal precipitation/weather), natural disaster, or man-made disaster emergency that causes you to be late for pick-up, the YMCA will not levy the late fee and will remain with the child until such time you can pick up your child safely. During this time, the YMCA will continue to try to contact your emergency contacts to pick up your child in your absence.

STAFF

The YMCA's Early Learning Center staff hold each child's safety and well-being at heart. YMCA staff have been selected based on their educational background, experience, and commitment to working with children. Pre-employment drug testing is required for all new staff and random drug testing is also conducted on a quarterly basis. Criminal background checks are performed for all staff as well. Continual training is provided throughout the duration of employment including, but not limited to, CPR, First Aid, and Daily Health Observation. We maintain a direct staff to child ratio that meets or exceeds state standards.

In addition, staff members strictly adhere to the YMCA code of conduct. Staff members will act in a Caring, Honest, Respectful, and Responsible manner, portraying a positive role model for youth. Staff members will respond to guardian(s), children, and each other with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, disability, color, national or ethnic origin, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Children need consistent caregivers in order to build a sense of security and trust. Our goal is for children to have a limited number of caregivers during a day. To ensure we preserve this continuity at our center, we maintain the following practices:

- Assigning full-time teachers to each classroom.
- Job descriptions for lead and assistant teachers to include continuity of care practices.
- Providing annual professional development to all teachers that address the continuity of care systems and practices.

NUTRITION

All food will meet the nutritional needs of children, as established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- Menus will be posted monthly for parental/guardian notification.
- Food portions are appropriate for the age of the child.
- Children will be encouraged, but not forced, to try new foods.

Parent/Guardian(s) may provide specific food for their children on the basis of religious, medical, or dietary reasons. A written letter must be submitted by the guardian identifying the reason for the specific diet. Food must be delivered in airtight containers or the original container. We will not keep leftovers.

The YMCA guidelines for food items brought from home for all Youth Development programs are as follows:

- The lunch must be in a sealed container and clearly labeled with the child's name and date.
- The YMCA discourages sugary snacks or empty calories, so please do not allow your child to bring candy, gum, or other junk food. (Even though we understand that they taste the best!)
- For the protection of all children, the YMCA does not allow children to share foods they bring from home.

With prior approval, guardian(s) may bring food and/or beverages for celebrations.

TOILET TRAINING & DIAPERING

YMCA Early Learning Center will not be providing disposable diapers, pull ups or baby wipes for any children. Your child's diapers, pull-ups, and wipes will be labeled and placed in their labeled cubby area. If your child needs to have ointment, lotion or powder administered you must give your signed permission. As soon as you and your child are ready to begin toilet training, let the teachers know. Our center will introduce toilet training by age 2. A cooperative effort between home and the center is most effective. Staff assist children in learning the habits of personal hygiene. Independence and development of self-help skills are encouraged. Children learning to use the toilet at the center are taken to the bathroom at least once an hour. Toilet training can be a difficult time for children and it is handled sensitively with patience, praise and positive reinforcement. If you have any suggestions to give the center with regards to your child, it is greatly appreciated. Once your child is moved to the Yellow Room, parents and teachers must aggressively pursue toilet training, as children will not be moved to the Red Room until they are potty trained.

1. No child is punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
2. Children shall be supervised at all times while toileting.
3. All Caregivers will be willing to assist in the toileting process when necessary.
4. Children and staff are required to wash their hands with liquid soap and running water after toileting. Staff will also wash their hands after assisting a child with toileting. Proper handwashing procedures are always required to be used.
5. Clothing soiled or wet will be bagged and stored apart from other items until the child leaves the center. The parent will be informed of what happened during the day so they know to clean their clothing appropriately.
6. A change of clothing must be kept for all children at the Early Learning Center in case of an accident. The parent will be informed when the supplies are running low so another change can be brought in. If the child has no spare clothing, the center will provide a set, which is to be cleaned before being returned to the center so another child can wear them.
7. We request that children be dressed in clothing that is easy for them to pull up and down. (No zippers, overalls, belts) Spare items (3 full sets of clothing) must be supplied for the Toilet Training process.



SICK CHILD PROCEDURES

The Health and Safety of your child is a matter of major importance to all of us. In order to protect the children in the program who are well, we have very stringent rules about sick children.

Under no circumstances may a parent bring a sick child to the YMCA Early Learning Center if the child shows any signs of illness (see symptoms requiring removal of care below) or is unable to participate in the normal routine and regular activities. Staff members will observe the health of each child, each day, as they enter the program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. We will notify you if your child shows symptoms of an illness.

For the below common illness and injuries, the child must be removed from participation with other children, and the parent/guardian will be required to pick up the child immediately. A late fee may be applied if your child is not picked up immediately after notification of illness.

- Vomiting or diarrhea (Child can return to the program when symptom free for 24 hours without medication.)
- Diarrhea while present at the center: two (2) or more episodes of diarrhea within 2 hours – parents will be contacted. Your child can return when there are no signs of diarrhea.
- Contagious illness evidenced by sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, constant cough, heavy nasal discharge, headache, etc.
- Child's temperature > 100.4* (Child can return to the program when symptom free for 24 hours without medication.)
- Head lice (Child can return once it has been treated. Must be checked by a staff member prior to the student returning.)
- Ring Worm (Must be treated and the area must be covered; if it cannot be covered, we will need a doctor's note for the student to return.)
- COVID-19 (positive or suspected to be positive).
- Allergic reaction
- Severe bleeding
- Possible sprain or break
- Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than we can provide without impacting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care.

The child may return 24–48 hours (depending upon illness) after they have received the first dose of an antibiotic. If a child receives an antibiotic for an ear infection, he/she may return to the Early Learning Center immediately if he/she has been free of other symptoms, including fever, for at least 24 hours. Allergy-related symptoms and non-communicable diseases do not require exclusion if you have a note from your doctor. Please notify us if your child will be absent from the program.



MEDICATION

North Carolina Child Care Licensing rules and regulations require that no drug, medication, ointments, lotions and/or powders will be administered to any child without specific instruction from the child's parent, physician or authorized health care professional.

All prescribed medicine must be in its original container bearing a printed pharmacist label with the following information:

- Name of person (to whom the medicine is prescribed)
- Name of medicine
- Dosage
- Dates (filled and expiration)
- Prescribing doctor
- Pharmacy information
- Directions



All prescribed medication must be accompanied by written instructions [dated and signed] from the physician or authorized health care provider. [Care Plan] The physician's Care Plan will give specific instructions for administering medication. [i.e. give 2 puffs every 4 hours only as needed, give 2 puffs before strenuous activities, give 2 puffs for wheezing, etc.]

Parents must also complete and sign a medication permission form (listing the same information) for staff to receive medication from parents and check to ensure we follow the six rights of medication (right child, right medication, right time(s), right dosage, right route, and right documentation). Parents must sign and date every day the medication is to be given to the child.

Should complications arise or your child becomes ill contact will happen in this order: parent(s)/guardian(s), emergency contacts, physician, and/or hospital.

INJURIES

If your child has a serious injury that may require more than our First Aid skills allow and/or involves a bump to the head in any way, we will make an immediate attempt to contact you. If we are unable to reach you or the person you have designated in case of such emergencies, we will call the child's physician. If necessary, we will call an ambulance.

CLEANLINESS & HYGIENE

The YMCA Early Learning Center teachers and staff do our best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed entering the classroom first thing in the morning, when coming in from the playground, before and after meals, and after toileting. We use paper towels for drying hands, so children do not have to use the same towel. All employees are required to wash their hands frequently.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Y will remind guardians in person, e-mail, and/or via the BrightWheel App about inclement weather procedures prior to an inclement weather event, if possible. You may also check your local news stations, the Twin Rivers YMCA website, Facebook page, and/or BrightWheel app for cancellations or delayed opening changes. If dangerous weather conditions develop during the day, parents/guardians may be contacted to pick up their children early due to school closing early.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The director and staff of each site are responsible for the safety of the children and have coordinated their facility emergency action plans with community public safety official and the landlord's security and facilities (when applicable). The intent of this plan is to assist the Director and staff in responding to emergency situations and provides a basis for the restoration of services.

If the YMCA site experiences an emergency situation, e.g., fire, we will make an immediate attempt to contact you. If we are unable to reach you in a timely manner, we will attempt to contact your emergency contact.

- We are required by state law to do one fire drill per month. We vary the time of the day to help the staff and children prepare to evacuate the building quickly and safely. We will not do fire drills or have outside time when the temperature is below 32 degrees or above 90 degrees. At least one teacher from every class must take their cell phone, first aid kit, and emergency bag. The director will remain in the building to do a sweep of the classrooms and bathrooms. After the sweep has been completed, the director will then turn off the lights and shut each door to indicate that everyone is out of the building and are safe.
- Fire drills are conducted to ensure that children know what to do in case there is a fire in school or in their homes. Fire drills also teach children to not panic and walk quickly but safely in a single-file line to the designated area away from a building experiencing a disaster. Once we have exited the building, children or staff will not re-enter the building until each teacher has taken classroom roster attendance and all children have been accounted for. Children will be expected to re-enter the building the same way they exited the building: quickly, safely, and quietly. Once children are back in their appropriate classes, the teacher will take attendance again to make sure that all children are safe. At all times, our emphasis will be on keeping children protected.



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Throughout its history, the Y has been a strong advocate for the child and children's rights; as a result, mistreatment or neglect of children and the resulting severe effects are of primary concern to the YMCA. To prevent the abuse of children in our care, the YMCA requires the following conduct and prohibitions:

I. Staff and volunteers shall not abuse or neglect children. The following may be examples of abuse and neglect:

- Physical abuse: strike, spank, shake, slap.
- Verbal abuse: humiliate, degrade, threaten, yell.
- Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch or verbal exchange.
- Mental abuse: shaming, withholding love, cruelty.
- Neglect: withholding food, water, basic care, etc.

II. Staff and volunteers are prohibited to have contact with children with whom their only relationship is through YMCA programs at any time outside of the YMCA facilities or program(s). This includes babysitting.

III. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from transporting children in their personal vehicles.

IV. Staff and volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised.

V. At no time during a YMCA program may staff or volunteers be alone with a single child where others cannot observe him/her. As staff and volunteers supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them.

- Staff and volunteers should conduct or supervise the following private activities in pairs, if at all possible: putting on bathing suits, changing clothes, taking showers, etc. When this is not feasible, staff and volunteers should be positioned so they are visible to others.

VI. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say "no". Affectionate touch and the warm feelings it brings are important factors in helping a child grow into a loving and peaceful adult.

- The rule of thumb for staff is to not touch any areas that a bathing suit would cover, including swim trunks. Appropriate touch includes side hugs, pats on the back, and high fives.

VII. Staff and volunteers will make sure that suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.

VIII. Children in YMCA programs must treat each other with Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility. Child-to-child prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Bullying and
- Sexual behaviors, including inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

IX. Staff and volunteers are to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation. The YMCA is mandated by state law to report suspicions of abuse.

If you observe violations of these procedures or any other red flags, the YMCA asks that you bring your concern to the Site Supervisor/Director. If you feel your concerns are not addressed appropriately, contact Eastern Carolina YMCA Interim CEO, Kelly Millington, 252-638-8799, or email kmillington@trymca.org. It is our job as a community organization to educate ourselves, our children, and their parents and guardians about potential dangers in our community and to protect them from these dangers. At the Y, parents and guardians are our partners in child abuse prevention.

DISCIPLINE & BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The YMCA is devoted to helping youth develop self-esteem, and feel discipline must be delivered in a positive and productive manner. Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior policy. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. The ultimate goal of discipline is self-discipline, control, and direction. Our goal is to provide this direction with positive words and examples so that they will learn the skills necessary to control their own behavior and cooperation with others. It is our intention to try to prevent many behavior problems by providing direct supervision, guidance, age-appropriate activities, love & interaction, a daily routine, and clear boundaries. Using the belief that most young children “follow the leader” when taught and will learn and develop values, the YMCA Early Learning Center adheres to the following discipline and behavior management policy:

WE WILL:

- Listen to the children
- Ignore minor misbehaviors
- Reason with and set limits
- Model appropriate behavior
- Praise, reward, and encourage
- Provide natural and logical consequences
- Explain things in an age-appropriate manner
- Provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior
- Use short and supervised periods of “two-minutes”
- Stay consistent with the behavior management program
- Modify the classroom environment to provide assistance
- Treat the children as people, with respect to their needs, desires, and feelings.



WE WILL NOT:

- Deny food or rest as punishment
- Allow discipline of a child by other children
- Relate punishment to eating, resting, or toileting
- Shame or punish when bathroom accidents happen
- Leave a child alone, unattended, or without supervision
- Place a child in a locked room, closet, or box as punishment
- Spank, bite, pinch, push, slap, or otherwise physically punish a child
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child’s parents, family, or ethnic group
- Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse a child



FORMS OF DISCIPLINE

We use three forms of discipline at the YMCA

1. **Redirection:** With this technique, the caregiver suggests or physically gives the child a different task or toy to stop the undesirable behavior. The child may need to be redirected to a different play center or work table. This technique is used first and foremost by staff with ALL ages of children.

2. **Reasoning or away-from-the-moment discussions:** Discipline involves teaching positive behavior as well as changing unwanted behavior. That is, children need to know what to do, as well as what not to do, and is a more effective tool in anticipating and preventing undesirable behavior than punishing it. "Away-from-the-moment" refers to dealing with the difficult behavior outside of the heat of the moment, and in advance or away from the actual misbehavior. This technique allows the teacher to provide an alternative, desirable behavior in advance. This is the second choice of discipline for staff.

3. **Two-minutes (time-out):** Proven to be one of the most effective disciplinary techniques available to caregivers, and is effective by eliminating reinforcement opportunities for negative behavior. Like any other procedure, two-minutes (time-out) must be unemotional and consistent, which is what makes it effective. This is the third choice for staff. We will never use the words, "time-out", only two-minutes.

BITING PROCEDURES

Although it is developmentally appropriate for a toddler (16 – 30 mos.) to bite because of limited language and social skills, it is an inappropriate behavior in Youth Development programs. We make every effort to redirect disruptive behavior through positive reinforcement & reflection & are committed to working with parents to resolve any issues. All incidents will be documented. The YMCA will take the following actions for biting incidents:

- Verbal notification via parent phone call, or parent conference
- 1 Day Suspension
- 3 Day Suspension
- 5 Day Suspension with dismissal warning
- Dismissal from the program

All children older than thirty-six months will be required to leave the ELC immediately if they bite or show aggressive behavior for any reason. A discipline form is kept on file for recording these occurrences.



SUSPENSION & TERMINATION

If a child continues to display misbehavior in accordance with Behavior Management and Biting Procedures:

- Suspension may result, based on the frequency and severity of the behavior.
- If the unacceptable behavior endangers another’s safety or the child’s safety, immediate suspension/termination may result.
- The guardian may be required to pick up his/her child WITHIN ONE HOUR after notification, depending on the nature of the misbehavior.

The Y reserves the right to terminate Youth Development program services at any time. If your child has been terminated from any of our programs, she/he may not attend the same program at a different location. If your school-aged child is no longer enrolled in our program, your child’s school will be notified so that he/she can go home on the appropriate school bus.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERISM

As your child learns and grows with us, we hope that you will choose to participate in parent engagement activities three-four times a year. We will plan activities to help our families be physically active, have healthy eating and nutrition habits, and enjoy quality time together.

Volunteers will need to have a clear criminal background and FBI checks as well as complete our YMCA child abuse prevention training in order to volunteer in the program. Parents and volunteers are never left alone with a group of children and will always have a staff member with them.

CONCLUSION

The YMCA Early Learning Center staff takes great delight in creating a safe, healthy, exciting, and stimulating learning environment. Our staff takes pride in the classes they teach and the students they nurture. We encourage you to contact our teachers and directors with comments, questions, concerns, or praises about your child or the school. We hope that this YMCA Early Childhood program will be the first “step” in your child’s involvement with the YMCA. Thank you for letting us be a part of your family.

